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SERVICE CUSTOMERS' LOYALTY EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

SOCIAL SCIENCES,
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Introduction

The research problem. Loyalty is not an especially new object of study. It has been analysed in various contexts, and quite a few loyalty studies in the world were carried out for banks, telecommunication companies, educational institutions, hotels, catering companies, and other organisations over the past few decades. The goal of the research was to measure the value of customer loyalty on certain markets, select the means for creating and developing loyalty, and establish the dependency of customer loyalty on certain characteristics of the organisation or customers. The most noticeable gap in the mosaic of studies in this field is the evaluation of loyalty. Research in the customer loyalty evaluation trend is fragmented, and the problem is only addressed in the context of other goals of research. None of the studied customer loyalty evaluation models answers current challenges and requirements to the evaluation of customer loyalty dictated by the practice and cannot be directly used for this purpose. The gap between the practical needs of service organisations and methodological potential dictates the demand to solve a rather complicated (due to the difficulty in establishing and even more difficulty in formally describing human psychological traits) customer loyalty evaluation problem essentially. Thus, the doctoral dissertation deals with the complex customer loyalty evaluation problem while answering the question relevant to the academic world, which constitutes the basis of the scientific problem at hand: how to evaluate customer loyalty towards a service provider?

Topicality of the problem. The progress of science and technology and international economic relations that become more and more intensive change the customer attitude in every field. Long-term, the success of a service business is not ensured anymore by the attractive price of the service or quality characteristics. In the complex and changing environment, it is more and more important for organisations to become orientated towards the market and a customer. Therefore, they try to ensure their success by creating and developing long-term relations with customers. It is noticeable that this strategy is appropriate because organisations need less efforts and financial resources to keep their current customers than to attract the new ones.

With the increase of dynamism and competitiveness in the business environment, more and more business entities operating in the service industry focus on the creation, management, evaluation, and development of customer loyalty. Increased capacity of service companies dictates the need to evaluate the customer loyalty. However, the current methodological potential of this field is not developed enough to use in practice. The methodological insufficiency of cus-

customer loyalty evaluation determined the topicality of academic research substantiating the model that creates the background for the evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider.

The research object is the evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider.

The aim of the research is to create a customer loyalty evaluation model corresponding to the modern needs of various service organisations that could be flexibly used by them in different data accessibility situations.

The tasks of the research. The following tasks have to be solved in order to achieve the aim:

1. To specify the concept of customer loyalty, to identify the specifics and drivers of customer loyalty towards a service provider and to reveal the problems of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider.
2. To perform the critical analysis of the methodological potential of customer loyalty evaluation.
3. To design the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service.
4. To test the applicability of the model of customer loyalty evaluation towards a service provider empirically.

Research methodology. The methods of concept, systematic, comparative, statistical analysis, logic and synthesis, as well as mathematical modelling were used for this dissertation.

Scientific novelty of the research

1. The suggested quantitative model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider based on the behavioural loyalty concept and versatile contents creates the background for the reasonable evaluation of customer loyalty and substantiation of customer loyalty encouragement solutions within service organisations.
2. The theoretically reasoned and empirically tested four-stage methodology was suggested, which due to the provided options of evaluation of customer loyalty in different data accessibility situations can be flexibly used with any type of services irrespective of the scale of activity of a service provider.
3. The created multi-optional customer loyalty evaluation solution using the measures of frequency and value of purchases or drivers determining them created the background for customer classification according to the levels of loyalty towards a service provider.
4. Upon systematising the information on the most frequently presented concepts determining customer loyalty perception interpretations, the academic cognisance of this phenomenon was supplemented and the definition of customer loyalty was specified.

5. Upon analysing the latest scientific research related to the topic of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider, the main groups of methods of measuring customer loyalty towards a service provider were classified and the concept of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider integrating the frequency of purchases and value of purchases constituents was distinguished.

The practical significance of achieved results. The created model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider can be used by organisations providing various services. Model application creates the background for answering the following practical needs:

1. The application of the created model ensures the background for quantitative evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service organisation. The model used in different data accessibility situations allows adequately measuring the state of customer loyalty towards a service provider; pursuant to the model application results, the organisation acquires the background for making decisions encouraging the customer loyalty towards a service provider.

2. The model can be used with business services of various types. The application of the model on different markets (business-to-customer, business-to-business) is acceptable.

3. The prepared methodology of applicability of the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider allows the accurate and quick evaluation of loyalty with low data acquisition and work costs. Therefore, it is considered an attractive method of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider for service organisations' executives and marketing specialists. Customer loyalty evaluation results obtained using any of the three options can be used to prepare the service provider's marketing strategy, and the regular application of the model can become an efficient measure of monitoring the customer loyalty towards a service provider.

Defended propositions

1. The created multi-optional customer loyalty evaluation model providing the premises for consideration of the available data array is superior in the context of qualitative methods due to possibilities provided by it to measure the customer loyalty quantitatively.

2. Behavioural loyalty concept (with the impact of attitudinal loyalty manifesting itself during the emotional loyalty formation stage) based on the elaboration of loyalty contents into the constituents of frequency of purchases and value of purchases is the most suitable for customer loyalty evaluation. The harmony of both those elements is practical from the standpoint of data accumulation and applicable to any type of services.

3. The prepared model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider is suitable for evaluation of both actual and expected loyalty. Depending on the existence of the fact of consumption or lack thereof, the suggested options and sub-options of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider ensure the adaptability important to the evaluation of customer loyalty as the combination of the frequency of purchases and value of purchases in terms of data accessibility.

4. The suggested model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider allows establishing the states of loyalty of individual customers, creates the background for performing the selection of the most useful customers of the organisation (the more loyal is the customer, the more they are useful to the service provider), and, according to the customer loyalty evaluation results, correcting the set of applicable means of customer loyalty encouragement.

The approval of results. Thirteen articles focusing on the subject of the dissertation were published, ten of them in reviewed periodical academic journals. One of the articles was published abroad (in the United States of America). Twelve presentations of the dissertation research results have been given at scientific conferences, eight of them were international.

Dissertation structure. The dissertation consists of the introduction, four chapters, conclusion, lists of references and author's publications, and annexes. The volume of the dissertation is 150 pages including 42 figures and 36 tables.

1. Theoretical Presumptions of Evaluation of Customer Loyalty towards a Service Provider

The chapter analyses the process of formation of and variety of attitudes towards the customer loyalty. Over more than six decades, the concept of loyalty has been developed from one-dimensional loyalty (behavioural or attitudinal) to multidimensional, which is especially popular in current studies. Nowadays loyalty, irrespective of the concept it is based on, is acknowledged as the most important driver of the long-term success of a service organisation. As customer loyalty becomes an important aspect at service organisations operating in the modern business environment, customer loyalty evaluation requires special attention and respective resources.

Customer loyalty evaluation is extremely important for the purposeful and reasonable encouragement of customer loyalty towards a service provider. Irrespective of the fact that quite a few scientists study various aspects of customer loyalty towards a service provider, the loyalty evaluation problem still exists.

More and more service organisations feel the need to measure customer loyalty. The satisfaction of this need is undoubtedly related to the selection of loyalty

concept. Solution of the problem of measurement of customer loyalty towards a service provider is encumbered by the lack of the set of loyalty determining drivers differentiated by the loyalty participants and impact of the drivers on loyalty. Customer loyalty phases and customers attributed to them also pose some problems.

Upon highlighting the most significant customer loyalty evaluation problems dealt with in the dissertation, it becomes clear that the academic community still does not provide answers to the following questions: which loyalty concept is superior –one-dimensional or multidimensional? And if it is the one-dimensional concept, is it behavioural or attitudinal? What are the drivers determining the customer loyalty towards a service provider? Which customer loyalty state classification shall be applicable to services? The identified problematic aspects of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider undoubtedly encumber the evaluation of customer loyalty as well as highlight the insufficiency of the current methodological potential for the needs of modern-day practices. Its fragmentary nature presupposed the prioritising of creation of a model essentially based on new principles.

2. Analysis of the Customer Loyalty Evaluation Methodological Potential

Upon summarising the customer loyalty research, loyalty evaluation methods were divided into two groups of different contents: 1) one-dimensional (behavioural and attitudinal); 2) multidimensional. One-dimensional customer loyalty measurement methods lack the validity and the applicable measures are quite limited. Multidimensional methods, although they integrate the behavioural and attitudinal loyalty, also have defects: they do not detail the evaluation of measures and do not provide limit values.

It is still unclear what customer loyalty elements should be measured to witness the analogical customer loyalty in identical or at least similar circumstances. Also, another indeterminacy problem is associated with loyalty elements – the role of those elements in the expression of loyalty is unclear, i.e. it is unknown if all elements make the same impact on customer loyalty.

Measurement of customer loyalty towards a service provider is also somewhat undetermined in terms of period. The period usually is not individualised considering the service inter-purchase cycle. Discussions also arise due to the complicated differentiation of the current methodological potential by the data accessibility; a part of research methods is exceptionally qualitative.

The performed analysis of customer loyalty evaluation studies of last few decades showed that in spite of the methodological potential created by the re-

searchers for this purpose, the application of compelling benefit of customer loyalty evaluation for service organisations, interest expressed by entrepreneurs, and customer loyalty evaluation methods in the practical mode is still a challenge for service organisations. On the other hand, methods suggested by researchers are to be considered the significant methodological base allowing the transit to the systematic solving of the problem. Principal solutions chosen to substantiate the evaluation of customer loyalty are as follows: 1) selection of the coordinated concept; 2) loyalty structuring and measurement of significance of its elements; 3) preparation of evaluation methodology for the loyalty evaluation period; 4) differentiation of loyalty evaluation according to the data accessibility; 5) preparation of the set of drivers determining the customer loyalty towards a service provider and evaluation of the impact of drivers on loyalty; 6) quantitative measurement.

3. Model of Evaluation of Customer Loyalty towards a Service Provider

The sequence of creation of the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider was as follows: the concept of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider was chosen, contents of loyalty towards a service provider was identified, significance of its constituents was established, set of tools for the establishment of research period was developed, various options and sub-options of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider creating the background for differentiation of loyalty evaluation according to the data accessibility were provided, and the classification of states of customer loyalty towards a service provider was prepared. The specification of each stage is provided in Table 1.

The model is distinguished by the following advantages: evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider is linked to the data accessibility situations – this solution allowed guaranteeing that the customer loyalty towards a service provider will be evaluated both when actual and only expected consumption and its data exist; the model allows establishing the states of loyalty of individual customers, and this can be used as the basis for selection of the most useful customers of the organisation (the more loyal is the customer, the more useful they are to the service provider); application of the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider creates the background for monitoring whether the loyalty encouragement means are expediently selected; the model is easily applicable at organisations providing various types of services and provides the background for comparing the customer loyalty towards services of different organisations; the model provides an opportunity to measure the customer loyalty using quantitative parameters.

Table 1. Specification of stages of creation of the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider

Stages	Suggested solutions
Selection of loyalty concept	Loyalty evaluation is grounded on the behavioural loyalty concept with the impact of attitudinal loyalty manifesting itself during the emotional stage of loyalty formation.
Establishment of loyalty contents	<p>Elements of customer loyalty towards a service provider – frequency of purchases and value of purchases disclose different aspects required to evaluate loyalty towards a service organisation: number of purchases and financial resources allocated to a service provider. Therefore, the evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider is based on the combination of those measures:</p> $L_{ijk} = f(v_{ijk}, d_{ijk})$ <p>It is expedient to base loyalty evaluation on relative values:</p> $v_{ijk} = \frac{V_{ijk}}{\sum_k V_{ijk}},$ $d_{ijk} = \frac{D_{ijk}}{\sum_k D_{ijk}}$
Measurement of the significance of elements of customer loyalty	The impact of elements of customer loyalty towards a service provider on the loyalty estimator is not equivalent – in accordance with the results of studies carried out in 1968–2012, the frequency of purchases and the value of purchases impact the customer loyalty differently: the frequency of purchases determines 47 per cent of loyalty, and 53 per cent stems from the value of purchases.
Definition of the customer loyalty evaluation period	It is suggested defining the period necessary to evaluate the customer loyalty towards a service provider according to the inter-purchase cycle. Depending on the variety of duration of inter-purchase cycles, the required loyalty evaluation duration period was selected for each service category (very frequently used, frequently used, rarely used, and very rarely used).

Continued Table 1

Stages	Suggested solutions
Differentiation of customer loyalty towards a service provider according to data accessibility situations	<p>The array of data required for the evaluation of loyalty must include the data on value and frequency of purchases of every customer purchasing services of specific type from the analysed provider (v_{ijk} and d_{ijk}) and from other providers of the same service. Possible data accessibility barriers determine three different loyalty evaluation options.</p> <p>Option I: all data on frequency and value of purchases is available. When the access to the required data is not limited, the consumption or business data is used.</p> <p>Option II: only the organisation's data on the customers' frequency of purchases and value of purchases is accessible. The data possessed by the organisation is used (by applying the principle of analogy) or the marketing research is performed. To obtain the data on frequencies and values of customers' purchases at other organisations providing the services of a certain type, the principle of analogy is applied by using: 1) the results of other empirical studies; 2) frequencies and values of purchases of the service of other organisation or other provider of service j.</p> <p>Option III: evaluation of drivers or a survey. The drivers determining frequencies and values of purchases are identified and their estimators are established. The set of drivers determining the customer loyalty is as follows: 1) customer's drivers; 2) service provider's drivers; 3) environmental drivers. In order to measure the impact on loyalty, a scale of ranks adapted individually to each driver is applied. A situation is modelled where there are no possibilities to obtain data required to evaluate the factual loyalty. In such cases it is suggested to evaluate the probable future loyalty by using the questionnaire survey method.</p>
Preparation of classification of states of customer loyalty towards a service provider	<p>Customer loyalty towards a service provider is divided into the phases of disloyalty, intermediate state, conditional loyalty, and absolute loyalty. Estimator of the customer loyalty towards a service provider situated the farthest from the maximum value shows that the service organisation does not use its entire customer loyalty potential.</p>

Permanent application of the model by service organisations creates the background for: increase of the long-term competitiveness of the organisation

since the problematic drivers determining the customer loyalty towards a service provider are identified and eliminated; identification of the least loyal customers and purposeful direction of loyalty encouragement measures at them; monitoring the dynamics of the estimator of customer loyalty towards a service provider and initiation of changes by selecting the top priority directions of encouragement of customer loyalty.

4. Experimental Approbation of the Model of Evaluation of Customer Loyalty towards a Service Provider

The methodology of application of the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider is designed for service providing organisations irrespective of their size, geographical location, specialisation, and number of customers. The customer loyalty evaluation algorithm is provided in Figure 1.

The catering company holding a restaurant was chosen for the empirical research. The services provided by the restaurant are considered very frequently used, and a period of 3 months is applicable in order to evaluate the loyalty of customers using these services.

In order to test the suitability of the suggested methodology thoroughly, customer loyalty towards the analysed catering company was evaluated using all options and sub-options. Customers in the intermediate state constituted the largest part in the sample of customers (Fig. 2).

Results obtained using different options and sub-options were not essentially different (Table 2), which allowed confirming the validity, suitability, and efficiency of the suggested model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider in terms of time consumption, especially in cases when the access to data on frequency and value of purchases is not limited.

Regular use of the model by the catering organisation while following changes in the estimator of customer loyalty towards a service provider would perform the loyalty monitoring function. Depending on the results obtained by using the suggested model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider and the sought loyalty estimator, executives and management specialists at service organisations can plan adequate means that would allow expecting higher customer loyalty towards a service provider in the future.

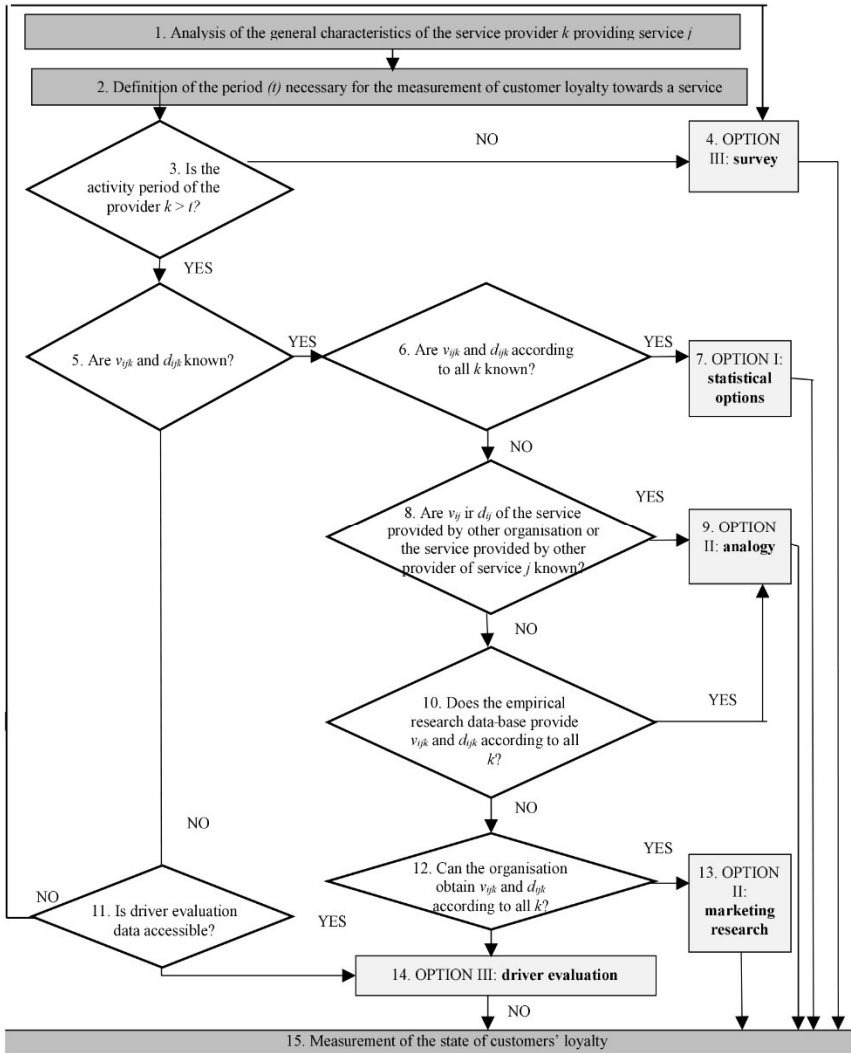


Fig. 1. The algorithm of customer loyalty evaluation

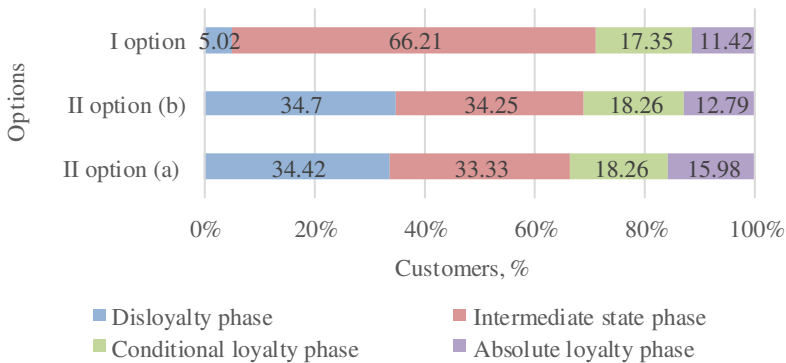


Fig. 2. The structure of customers according to loyalty

Table 2. Estimators of loyalty of customers using catering services

Options	I	II		III	
Sub-op-tions	–	Data held by the organisation	Marketing research data	Measurement of drivers	Survey
L	0.46	0.45	0.47	0.49	0.49

General Conclusions

1. The analysis of conceptual presumptions of customer loyalty evaluation, which is the important priority of academic research in the marketing field, allowed establishing that the opinions of researchers on the advantage of loyalty concepts (behavioural, attitudinal, multidimensional) are quite differentiated. This variety of opinions determined the formation of various approaches to customer loyalty towards a service provider, the analysis of which allows defining it as the positive attitude of a customer towards a service (or its attributes) motivating to prioritise a certain provider when purchasing services of the specific type. Both positive customer attitude towards the service provider and favourable behaviour towards the organisation are determined by a wide range of drivers. The performed analysis of those drivers differentiated according to the types of service activities created the background to prepare the universal set of drivers determining the loyalty towards all types of activities carried out by service organisations.

2. The performed analysis of academic literature on evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider over the last few decades highlighted the need to purposefully develop the customer loyalty evaluation methodological base creating the background that allows solving the most significant problems of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider: unclear and unreasonable selection of customer loyalty concept; lack of the set of drivers determining the customer loyalty; confusion encountered due to differences in the typology of loyalty phases.

3. The performed customer loyalty evaluation methodological potential analysis allowed highlighting the methodological premises for the creation of the instrument for the evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service organisation. With respect to solving the main tasks, they are as follows: selection of the coordinated concept, loyalty structuring and measurement of significance of its elements, preparation of methodology for the establishment of the research period, differentiation of loyalty evaluation according to the data accessibility, preparation of the set of drivers determining the customer loyalty towards a service provider and determination of the impact of drivers on loyalty, quantitative measurement.

4. According to the methodological premises, the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider was created that is based on the behavioural loyalty concept, includes two unequal-weight loyalty constituents (47% frequency of purchases and 53% value of purchases), and creates the background for selection of the period which is most suitable for the research. The model is distinguished by the fact that it provides the adaptation of process and contents of evaluation to the available data accessibility and the existence of actual consumption (or lack thereof). The created multi-optional customer loyalty evaluation model is applicable in three different data accessibility scenarios: evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider with the unlimited access to the data on frequency and value of purchases; evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider with the unlimited access to the data on frequency and value of purchases held only by the analysed service organisation; evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider without the access to the data on frequency and value of purchases. Under the third option, the contents of the model was structured using the drivers that are the most frequently distinguished in driver classifications but are not overlapping, and the reduction of their qualitative characteristics into the quantitative expression was performed. The principle of adaptation to the data accessibility ensures the possibility to use the model in constantly and quickly changing conditions of both business entities providing services and their environment. The result generated by the suggested model of evaluation of customer loyalty

towards a service provider is expressed in one synthesised estimator (index), irrespective of the fact which loyalty evaluation option is used.

5. Upon performing the empirical testing of the suitability of the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider for the catering company according to the prepared methodology, similar loyalty estimators (0.45–0.49) were obtained using all options and sub-options. It confirmed the suitability of the model of evaluation of customer loyalty towards a service provider in different data accessibility situations.

List of Published Works on the Topic of the Dissertation

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PASLAUGŲ VARTOTOJŲ LOJALUMO VERTINIMAS

Problemos formulavimas. Lojalumas, kaip tyrimo objektas, nėra itin naujas. Jis analizuotas įvairiuose kontekstuose, per pastaruosius keletą dešimtmečių pasaulyje atlikta nemažai lojalumo tyrimų, skirtų bankams, telekomunikacijų įmonėms, švietimo įstaigoms, viešbučiams maitinimo paslaugų teikėjams ir kitoms organizacijoms. Atliekant tyrimus siekta nustatyti vartotojų lojalumo reikšmę tam tikrose rinkose, parinkti lojalumo kūrimo ar didinimo priemonės, nustatyti vartotojų lojalumo priklausomybę nuo tam tikrų organizacijos ar vartotojų charakteristikų. Šios srities tyrimų mozaikoje didžiausia spraga – lojalumo vertinimas. Vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo pakraipos tyrimai yra fragmentiški, problema nagrinėjama tik kitų tyrimo tikslų kontekste. Nė vienas iš nagrinėtų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelių neatitinka šiandienos verslo praktikos iššūkių, praktikos diktuojamų reikalavimų įvertinti vartotojų lojalumą ir negali būti tiesiogiai pritaikytas pagal tokią paskirtį. Atotrūkis tarp paslaugų organizacijų praktikos reikmių ir metodinio potencialo diktuoja poreikį iš esmės spręsti gana komplikotą dėl sunkiai nustatomų ir dar sunkiau formalizuotai aprašomų žmogaus psichologinių savybių vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo problemą. Taigi šiame darbe sprendžiama vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo problema, atsakant į aktualų

moksliui klausimą, sudarantį sprendžiamos mokslinės problemos pagrindą: kaip įvertinti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumą?

Darbo aktualumas. Mokslo ir technologijų pažanga, intensyvėjantys tarptautiniai ekonominiai ryšiai keičia visų sričių vartotojų nuostatas. Ilguoju laikotarpiu paslaugų organizacijų sėkmės jau nebeužtikrina patraukli paslaugos kaina ar kokybės charakteristikos. Kompleksiškoje, kintančioje aplinkoje organizacijoms vis svarbiau orientuotis į rinką ir vartotoją, tad jos bando užsitikrinti sėkmę kurdamos ir plėtodamos ilgalaikius ryšius su vartotojais. Pastebima, kad tokia strategija tinkama, nes esamiems vartotojams išlaikyti paslaugų organizacijos turi skirti mažiau pastangų bei finansinių išteklių nei naujiems pritraukti.

Didėjant organizacinės aplinkos dinamiškumui ir konkurencingumui, vis daugiau paslaugų teikėjų atkreipia dėmesį į vartotojų lojalumo kūrimą, valdymą, vertinimą ir didinimą. Išaugęs paslaugų organizacijų mastas diktuoja poreikį taikyti vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo metodus, tačiau pastarųjų kelių dešimtmečių mokslinėje ir profesinėje literatūroje pateikiamas metodinis paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo bagažas nėra pribrandintas iki praktinio jo naudojimo verslo diktuojamu režimu. Vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo metodinis nepakankamumas nulėmė mokslinių tyrimų, kuriais remiantis būtų sukurtas modelis, sudarantis prielaidas įvertinti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumą, aktualumą.

Tyrimų objektas – paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimas.

Darbo tikslas – sukurti šiuolaikinius paslaugų organizacijų poreikius atitinkančių vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelį, lanksčiai taikomą įvairiose paslaugų organizacijose skirtingomis duomenų prieigos situacijomis.

Darbo uždaviniai. Darbo tikslui pasiekti reikia spręsti šiuos uždavinius:

1. Patikslinti vartotojų lojalumo sąvoką, nustatyti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo specifiką, veiksnius bei išgryninti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo problemas.
2. Atlikti kritinę vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo metodinio potencialo analizę.
3. Sukurti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelį.
4. Empiriškai patikrinti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelio pritaikomumą.

Tyrimų metodika. Darbe taikyti koncepto analizės, sisteminės ir lyginamosios analizės, logikos ir sintezės, matematinio modeliavimo, statistinės analizės metodai.

Darbo mokslinis naujumas

1. Pasiūlytas kiekybinis elgsenos lojalumo koncepcija ir įvairiapusišku turiniu grįstas paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelis sukuria prielaidas adekvačiai įvertinti vartotojų lojalumą ir pagrįsti vartotojų lojalumo skatinimo sprendimus paslaugų organizacijose.

2. Pasiūlyta teoriškai argumentuota ir empiriškai patikrinta keturių etapų metodika, kuri dėl numatytų paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo variantų skirtingomis duomenų prieigos situacijomis gali būti lanksčiai taikoma bet kurios veiklos rūšies verslo paslaugų atveju, nepriklausomai nuo paslaugos teikėjo veiklos masto.

3. Parengtas daugiavariantis sprendimas vartotojų lojalumo vertinimui, naudojant pirkimų dažnumo ir vertės rodiklius arba juos lemiančius veiksnius, sudaro prielaidas klasifikuoti vartotojus pagal lojalumo paslaugoms lygius.

4. Susisteminus žinias apie dažniausiai pateikiamas vartotojų lojalumo sampratos interpretacijas nulėmusias koncepcijas, papildytas mokslinis šio reiškinio pažinimas ir patikslintas vartotojų lojalumo apibrėžimas.

5. Išnagrinėjus naujausius mokslinius tyrimus, susijusius su paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo problematika, suklasifikuotos pagrindinės paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo metodų grupės, išgryninta paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo koncepcija, integruojanti pirkimų dažnumo ir pirkimų vertės dedamąsias.

Darbo rezultatų praktinė vertė. Sukurtas paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelis gali būti taikomas įvairias paslaugas teikiančiose organizacijose. Modelio taikymas sudaro prielaidas tenkinti šias verslo praktikos reikmes:

1. Sukurto modelio taikymas sudaro prielaidas įvertinti paslaugų organizacijos vartotojų lojalumą kiekybine išraiška. Taikant modelį įvairiomis duomenų prieigos situacijomis pagrįstai nustatoma paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo būseną; vadovaujantis modelio taikymo rezultatais organizacijai sudaromos prielaidos priimti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumą skatinančius sprendimus.

2. Modelis gali būti taikomas įvairaus tipo verslo paslaugoms. Priimtinas modelio taikymas įvairiose rinkose (verslas – vartotojui, verslas – verslui).

3. Parengta paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelio taikymo metodika leidžia tiksliai ir greitai įvertinti lojalumą nedidelėmis duomenų gavimo, darbo sąnaudomis, todėl laikytina patrauklia paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo priemone paslaugų organizacijų vadovams, rinkodaros specialistams. Vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo rezultatai, gauti bet kuriuo iš trijų variantų, gali būti naudojami paslaugų teikėjo rinkodaros strategijai rengti, o reguliarius modelio taikymas gali tapti efektyvia paslaugų teikėjo vartotojų lojalumo monitoringo priemone.

Ginamieji teiginiai

1. Parengtas daugiavariantis paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelis, sudarantis prielaidas atsižvelgti į turimą duomenų masę, kokybinių metodų fone yra pranašus suteikiamomis galimybėmis kiekybiškai įvertinti vartotojų lojalumą.

2. Vartotojų lojalumui įvertinti tinkamiausia yra elgsenos lojalumo koncepcija (su požiūrio lojalumo, pasireiškiančio emociniame lojalumo formavimosi etape, įtaka), grindžiama lojalumo turinio detalizavimu į pirkimų dažnumo ir pirkimų vertės dedamąsias. Abiejų šių elementų dermė yra praktiška duomenų kaupimo požiūriu ir taikytina bet kurio tipo verslo paslaugoms.

3. Parengtas paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelis tinkamas naudoti tiek faktiniam, tiek laukiamam lojalumui įvertinti. Priklausomai nuo vartojimo fakto (ne)buvimo siūlomi paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo variantai ir povariančiai, užtikrinantys vartotojų lojalumo, kaip pirkimų dažnumo ir pirkimų vertės derinio, vertinimui svarbų pritaikomumą duomenų prieigos aspektu.

4. Siūlomas paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelis leidžia nustatyti individualių vartotojų lojalumo būsenas, sudaro prielaidas atlikti naudingiausių organizacijos vartotojų atranką (kuo vartotojas lojalesnis, tuo jis naudingesnis paslaugų teikėjui) ir, remiantis vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo rezultatais, koreguoti taikomų vartotojų lojalumo skatinimo priemonių rinkinį.

Darbo rezultatų aprobavimas. Disertacijos tema išspausdinta trylika straipsnių: dešimt recenzuojamuose periodiniuose mokslo žurnaluose. Vienas iš straipsnių publikuotas užsienyje (Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose). Disertacijos tyrimų rezultatai viešinti dvylikoje mokslinių konferencijų, iš jų aštuonios – tarptautinės.

Disertacijos struktūra. Disertaciją sudaro įvadas, keturi skyriai ir rezultatų apibendrinimas. Darbo apimtis – 150 puslapių. Tekste panaudotos 36 sunumeruotos formulės, 42 paveikslai ir 36 lentelės. Rengiant disertaciją panaudoti 307 literatūros ir kiti šaltiniai.

Pirmasis disertacijos skyrius skirtas teorinėms paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo nustatymo prielaidoms atskleisti. Antrajame disertacijos skyriuje atlikta vartotojų lojalumo nustatymo metodinio potencialo analizė. Trečiajame disertacijos skyriuje pateiktas siūlomas paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo nustatymo modelis. Ketvirtajame skyriuje, naudojant realius maitinimo paslaugų įmonės duomenis, empiriniu tyrimu patikrintas siūlomas paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo nustatymo modelis.

Bendrosios išvados

1. Išnagrinėjus koncepcines vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo – svarbaus rinkodaros mokslinių tyrimų prioriteto – prielaidas, nustatyta, kad tyrėjų požiūriai dėl lojalumo koncepcijų (elgsenos, požiūrio, daugiadimensinės) pranašumo yra labai skirtingi. Ši požiūrių įvairovė lėmė skirtingų paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo traktuočių suformavimą, kurių analizė leido paslaugų vartotojų lojalumą apibrėžti kaip teigiamą vartotojo požiūrį į tam tikros rūšies paslaugą, skatinantį pirmenybės teikimą paslaugos teikėjui. Atlikus plataus spektro tiek teigiamą paslaugų

vartotojo požiūrį, tiek palankią elgseną organizacijos atžvilgiu lemiančių veiksnių, diferencijuotą pagal paslaugų veiklos rūšis, analizę, parengtas visoms paslaugų organizacijų veiklos rūšims universalus lojalumą lemiančių veiksnių rinkinys.

2. Atlikta pastarųjų kelių dešimtmečių mokslinės literatūros paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo tematika analizė išryškino poreikį kryptingai plėtoti vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo metodinę bazę, sudarančią prielaidas spręsti reikšmingiausias paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo problemas: neaiškų ir nepagrįstą vartotojų lojalumo koncepcijos pasirinkimą; vartotojų lojalumą lemiančio veiksnių rinkinio stoką; painiavą, atsirandančią dėl lojalumo fazių tipologijų skirtumų.

3. Atlikta vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo metodinio potencialo analizė leido išgryninti metodines prielaidas paslaugų organizacijos vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo priemonės kūrimui: suderintos koncepcijos pasirinkimo, lojalumo struktūrizavimo ir jo elementų reikšmingumo nustatymo, tyrimo laikotarpio nustatymo metodikos parengimo, lojalumo vertinimo diferencijavimo pagal turimų duomenų prieigą, paslaugų vartotojų lojalumą lemiančių veiksnių rinkinio parengimo ir veiksnių poveikio lojalumui vertinimo, kiekybinio vertinimo.

4. Vadovaujantis metodinėmis prielaidomis, sukurtas paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelis, grindžiamas elgsenos lojalumo koncepcija, apima dvi savo svoriu nelygiavertes lojalumo dedamąsias (47 proc. pirkimų dažnumo ir 53 proc. pirkimų vertės) ir sudaro prielaidas parinkti tyrimui tinkamiausią laikotarpį. Modelio taikymui numatytas vertinimo eigos ir turinio pritaikymas turimai duomenų prieigai bei faktinio vartojimo buvimui (arba ne). Parengtas daugiavariantis vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelis taikytinas trimis skirtingais duomenų prieigos scenarijais: paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimui, turint neribotą pirkimų dažnumo ir vertės duomenų prieigą, paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimui, turint neribotą prieigą tik prie tiriamos paslaugų organizacijos pirkimų dažnumo ir vertės duomenų ir paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimui neturint prieigos prie pirkimų dažnumo ir vertės duomenų. Trečiajame variante modelio turinys struktūruotas naudojant veiksnių klasifikacijose dominuojančius, tačiau nepersidengiančius veiksnus, nustatytos individualizuotos jų kiekybinės išraiškos. Įgyvendintas pritaikymo duomenų prieigai principas užtikrina modelio taikymo galimybes esant verslo praktikai būdingoms, nuolat ir sparčiai kintančioms tiek pačių paslaugų organizacijų, tiek jų aplinkos sąlygoms. Pasiūlyto paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelio generuojamas rezultatas, nepriklausomai nuo to, kuris lojalumo vertinimo variantas taikomas, išreiškiamas vienu sintezuotu įverčiu (indeksu).

5. Pagal parengtą paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelio metodiką atlikus modelio tinkamumo empirinį tikrinimą maitinimo paslaugas teikiančios įmonės atveju, visais variantais ir povariančiais gauti artimi lojalumo įverčiai

(nuo 0,45 iki 0,49) leido konstatuoti paslaugų vartotojų lojalumo vertinimo modelio tinkamumą skirtingomis duomenų prieigos situacijomis.

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SERVICE CUSTOMERS' LOYALTY EVALUATION

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